

“I’m Brave, and I can do this!”

- One of the best memories I have of Gaius and Katy is this one:
  - We were on vacation, we were at the beach, as we do, and we also had a swimming pool there where we were staying
  - Gaius was not quite 4 years old yet, and was still a little unsure when it came to water, and especially when it came to jumping in the pool
  - This might have been around the time he was scared to death of the waves from the ocean coming up to his feet
  - Generally, our trip was good, but his fear around the ocean waves and pool made it less fun for him
  - Katy decided she was going to help him overcome that fear and uncertainty around the water
  - And to really start enjoying the pool and hopefully then swimming lessons after
  - Gaius had all of his floaters and goggle on and everything you can imagine to keep him safe and make him feel safe
  - She offered to hold his hand and they were going to jump in the pool together.
  - I was watching with my camera ready, and I am not sure where it came from in between the laughs, and the “ok get ready!”
  - She had Gaius say with her, loudly and confidently, “I am brave and I can do this!!”
  - And they would jump in!
  - It started to worked! Every time Gaius and Katy would say in unison, I’m brave and I can do this, he would jump right in with her
  - Later, they used the same phrase to get him to run into the waves instead of away from them
  - They would start up on the beach, grab hands, and yell: “I’m brave and I can do this”
  - And run into the ocean until they fell down giggling and screaming
  - It kinda became a motto there for a little while, when something was scary, new
  - Someone in our family would say, “I am brave and I can do this.” And go at it head first with shrewdness, and yet some abandon

- I felt that way just a bit when I heard our Gospel for this morning
- We hear Jesus having what is a pretty serious talk about what it means to follow him
- I hear him say that following him is costly, you will have to let go of so many things
- But you are brave, and you can do this. And it's worth it.
- We pick up not too far after leaving Jesus last Sunday
  - Jesus is gaining notoriety not only with his miracles, his healing
  - But with rhetoric- his manner of teaching, he sounds like a prophet, he teaches in parable and hyperbole <sup>1</sup>
  - All expected from a nomadic street preacher and healer
- We will mention this a several places within this text as we move through it
  - Because too often Jesus says some outrageous things if we are taking them literally
  - Like pluck out an eye, or cut off a hand
  - Or in this case, hate someone. And give up all of your possessions.
  - And salt that loses saltiness and is not even fit for the manure pile!
  - All of these things we have to look beyond the literal to really get a sense
- Jesus is taking a moment here in Luke because I sense that things are going so well, he is beginning to wonder if they really understand
- Of course they don't, not even the 12 disciples yet
- But certainly not the fair-weather crowd that is looking for the miracle, or the next time Jesus ruffles feathers of the religious leaders
- Most authors suggest that Jesus is trying to sift through these folks who follow him to see who is really ready
- Jesus says, Who ever does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, even life itself, cannot be my disciple
- That's tough- that would not only encourage us to break one of the 10 commandments of honoring father and mother
- But I venture to say that many of us might have trouble with this
- We have to take the rhetoric and purpose in mind here:
- When Jesus says hate, it is not to have great anger, or disgust like our modern word<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Ralls, *Feasting on the Gospels*, Luke, Westminster John Knox Press, Luke 14:25-33, Pastoral Perspective

<sup>2</sup> Mark Ralls, *Feasting on the Gospels*, Luke, Westminster John Knox Press, Luke 14:25-33, Pastoral Perspective

- It is more about a sense of the willingness to turn away from
- Or really, how we relate to God in the midst of family relationships
- How our call from God and our desire to follow Christ fits into our value calculus and risk assessment
- Jesus is trying to get everyone to understand just how important God's call in their lives should be!
- The ancient family was everything... it was income and livelihood through the family business, whatever that might be
- It was the childcare, the retirement plan, the hospital, and the nursing home all rolled into one
- In some ancient cultures, even the dating scene as parents often had much to say about who their children married, and why
- Whoever does not carry the cross cannot be my disciple
- Give up all possessions
- Don't be like salt that has no flavor... that is useless.
- Truly, I think Jesus is doing a little shock value, attention getting
- The challenge is not the literal things that Jesus names
- But the elevation of God and our calling to be like Christ in our lives to among the highest values
- Indeed, the highest.
- And the cross?
- That in order for that to happen, who we currently are might have to metaphorically die in order to be resurrected as something new
- John Burgess, in *Feasting on the Gospels*, says: All of us will face our own Golgotha, the place of crucifixion<sup>3</sup>
  - Where something in our lives will be given up so that the life of faith can take its place.
- What is demanded of a disciple is that the network of many loyalties in which we all live, the claim of Christ and the gospel not only takes precedence
  - But redefines the others. <sup>4</sup>
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer describes it as "Costly Grace"<sup>5</sup>
  - Costly because it costs people their lives.
  - Grace, because it thereby makes them live.

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<sup>3</sup> John P. Burgess, *Feasting on the Gospels*, Luke, Westminster John Knox Press, Luke 14:25-33, Theological Perspective

<sup>4</sup> Interpretation Commentary, Westminster John Knox Press, Digital version, Luke 14:25-35

<sup>5</sup> John P. Burgess, *Feasting on the Gospels*, Luke, Westminster John Knox Press, Luke 14:25-33, Theological Perspective

- Jesus is telling his hearers to know what they are asking for... know what it means to follow and be like Jesus
- To be reborn
- Remade
- It is helpful to me, after hearing Jesus with some hard hitting, shocking rhetoric
  - To look at other ways of seeing death and resurrection
  - Of being reborn and being remade
  - And so helpfully given to us today is the amazing and comforting passage of the potter and the clay
  - Same message, but without the big, booming prophetic voice trying to scare the truth into everyone
  - Instead, we hear of this process of death and resurrection through a potter who shapes a vessel
  - But when it does not go right, he starts it over and remakes it<sup>6</sup>
  - And maybe I am influenced by that movie with Patrick Swazee in it -is it Ghost?
  - I imagine this act as a caring one.
  - Israel and its nations, you and me, the entirety of creation it self- like clay in the hands of God<sup>7</sup>
  - And when things do not go well, they are torn down, put back into a lump, and remade
  - Reminds me of Genesis, the creation poem, when God shaped Adam and Eve from the clay
  - And even more, the word here for the potter's "wheel" can also be used for the midwife's stool <sup>8</sup>
    - Where she would sit and help bring new life into this world
  - God is sitting there, coaxing new life out of the old
  - Perhaps Jesus is really asking us and his followers: are you willing to be reshaped?
  - Are you able to let go of the misshapenness that mistakes and circumstances have made, and let God create a new vessel?
- I ran across a quote this week through a seminar I am a part of

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<sup>6</sup> John T. Debevoise, *Feasting on the Word*, © 2009, 2010 Westminster John Knox Press, Year C Proper 18 Jeremiah, Pastoral Perspective, Digital

<sup>7</sup> Soards, Marion, ed., *Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary*, (Nashville, Abingdon Press: 1994), p 20

<sup>8</sup> Strong's Dictionary, number h0070

- It was told to me that John Acuff says: “Fear comes free, hope takes work.”
- Sometimes it is easy to look outside of ourselves at our world with its problems and brokenness
- At other people’s brokenness, and suggest that death and resurrection might be the best thing
- That the clay might need to be reset and reshaped into something else
- Can you also hear Jesus’ question for us too: are you ready?
- Am I ready?
- Is there something I hold onto that I would never God remake for fear of losing it?
- Maybe so, and maybe with God’s help I can learn to let go and let the potter resurrect that too
- I am brave, I can do this.
- There’s an old Baptist hymn that I grew up on, called “Have thine own way Lord,”
- And it went something like this, and the first and last verses because that’s what we always sang!

1. Have thine own way, Lord! Have thine own way!\_\_\_\_\_

2. Have thine own way, Lord! Have thine own way!\_\_\_\_\_

3. Have thine own way, Lord! Have thine own way!\_\_\_\_\_

4. Have thine own way, Lord! Have thine own way!\_\_\_\_\_

1. Thou art the pot - ter, I am the clay!\_\_\_\_\_

2. Search me and try me, Mas - ter, to - day!\_\_\_\_\_

3. Wound - ed and wea - ry, Help me, I pray!\_\_\_\_\_

4. Hold o'er my be - ing Ab - so - lute sway!\_\_\_\_\_

1. Mold me and make me Aft - er thy will,\_\_\_\_\_

2. Pur - er than snow, Lord, Wash me just now,\_\_\_\_\_

3. Pow - er all pow - er Sure - ly is thine!\_\_\_\_\_

4. Fill with thy Spir - it 'Til all shall see\_\_\_\_\_

1. While I am wait - ing, Yield - ed and still.\_\_\_\_\_

2. As in thy pres - ence Hum - bly I bow.\_\_\_\_\_

3. Touch me and heal me, Sav - ior di - vine!\_\_\_\_\_

4. Christ on - ly, al - ways, Liv - ing in me!\_\_\_\_\_